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A

CHARGE

Delivered at a

VISITATION,

Held for the

ARCHDEACONRY

OF

NORTHUMBERLAND.

In the Year M,DCC,LXI.

BY

THOMAS ROBINSON, D. D.

ARCHDEACON *of* NORTHUMBERLAND.

who died November 7. 1761.

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A

CHARGE

Delivered at a

VISITATION, &c.

THOUGH I am very ſenſible, my Reverend Brethren, and remark it with pleaſure, that you have no need, at this our meeting, of any admonition or advice from me, yet I ſhould be loath, however excuſable I may be at preſent, to fruſtrate your expectation by diſmiſſing you with that ſilence which in my own judgment would become me better than the beſt diſcourſe that I can make. God be thanked that I cannot call upon you at this time to give your attention to any thing that has lately happened detrimental or dangerous either to the national church of which we are miniſters, or to the chriſtian church in general, as far as I know. But inveterate corruptions, of miſchievous tendency, and much complained of, there are many, which it would be well if we could mitigate in any degree, ſince a perfect cure of our conſtitutional maladies is not to be expected.

ONE of them may ſuffice at preſent to employ our thoughts; I mean the RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE maintained with ſuch ſtrictneſs in the primitive church, but ſoon relaxed, I might ſay aboliſhed, when popiſh uſurpation and avarice prevailed, for lucre's ſake diſpenſing with all laws enacted for the reſtraint of

vice and immorality. It was the ſcandalous abuſe of theſe diſpenſations, this impious traffick with ſacred things, that produced the Reformation, and provoked our forefathers to ſhake off the papal yoke they had ſo long groaned under, and which chriſtian patience and piety were no longer able to bear. It was natural to expect that the reformation which owed its birth to theſe corruptions would firſt have been applied to the amendment of them, But it happened otherwiſe, and we may account for it. Every thing could not be attended to at once; and popery had introduced worſe errors which required the more immediate and principal regard; but theſe being corrected, the firſt zeal and ardor, as it is uſual in ſuch caſes, began to abate; when the main ſtrength of the enemy was broken, quarter was given to its light armed troops; nay, ſome of them were perhaps unwarily incorporated with our own regular forces; and thus it came to paſs that this reformed church of ours ſtill wants to be reformed, as it annually laments, in this article of diſcipline.

Let us now conſider by what means we may beſt endeavour to reform it. In order to which, I ſhall ſet before you, and give you my opinion of one of the firſt canons relative to this ſubject which we meet with in the chriſtian code, of which the authority at leaſt is indiſputable, whatever its meaning may be; for the maker of it was the apoſtle St. *Paul*, and it ſtands recorded in the fifth chapter of his firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if "any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covet- "ous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extor- "tioner, with ſuch a one no not to eat."

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THE immediate occaſion of this injunction was a ſin of a very heinous nature committed by a perſon in the church of *Corinth*, with reference to whom, it ſeems probable to me, that in ſome former epiſtle now loſt the apoſtle had given this general direction, " not to company with fornicators;" which, leſt it ſhould be miſinterpreted by them to an inconvenient ſenſe, he here proceeds to explain more fully, by telling them, that he did not thereby intend to forbid all intercourſe with the *Gentiles* who were guilty of this ſin; for ſuch a prohibition would have been the greateſt hardſhip imaginable at that time when almoſt all the world was heathen, when fornication was commonly practiſed and allowed, and all other vice, and immorality ſo prevalent. " I wrote unto you in an epiſtle, not " to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the " fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortion- " ers, or idolaters; for then muſt ye needs go out of the " world." That is, as the world is now corrupted, you can have no intercourſe with human kind, if you are forced to abſtain from the company of all perſons infected with theſe vices. But my meaning is, to command you to withdraw from the converſation of thoſe of your own body, of your chriſtian brethren who are wicked and ungodly, to exclude all ſuch from your religious aſſemblies, and to have no dealings with them in private life.

LET us now ſee how far we chriſtians at this time are obliged by this injunction, which, as I ſaid, is one of the firſt canons on which eccleſiaſtical diſcipline is founded.

And here it is to be noted, that all the orders and decrees of the apoſtles were not intended to be of perpetual uſe, but being accommodated to the exigencies of the age in which they were given, might be varied according to the cuſtoms and occaſions of after-times. The general rule was, "Let "every thing be done to edification.—Let all things be done "decently and in order." But things which at one time are decent and comely may, as the faſhions and notions of mankind change, become prepoſterous and abſurd; things which were once ſignificant and ſubſervient to piety, may afterwards grow unprofitable, inconvenient, offenſive; and therefore, though formerly preſcribed by apoſtolical authority, no longer fit to be retained. Such were thoſe feaſts of charity which preceded the Lord's ſupper in the primitive church; The prohibition of mens wearing long hair, *&c.* as a thing in thoſe days ſhameful and indecent; The recommendation of a ſingle life during the rage of perſecution; And the anointing with oil for the cure of ſick perſons, a ceremony which had reference to the miraculous gift of healing, long ſince withdrawn, as others of the like nature, from the chriſtian church.

Now to apply theſe inſtances to the caſe which we are conſidering—I do not think that the injunction above recited is exactly parallel, but rather of a mixed kind, having ſomewhat moral, and of perpetual obligation, and ſomething occaſional, and ſuited to thoſe times, but which is now become unneceſſary, nay altogether in our circumſtances impracticable. For

1. In the preſent degenerate and corrupt ſtate of the world,

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it is impoſſible for religious inhabitants of chriſtian countries to forbear all intercourſe with wicked people, ſince as St. *Paul* ſays, they muſt then needs go out of the world, ſince under ſuch a reſtraint, there would be no living with any tolerable convenience. In the primitive times the number of believers was comparatively ſo ſmall, and the generality of theſe ſo religious and good, that any one without much difficulty might abſtain from the company of a fellow chriſtian that was wicked, being allowed an intercourſe with all the reſt of mankind however corrupt and irreligious. But the times and manners are now changed; our world is become chriſtian by profeſſion, yet the greater part of it wicked in their lives; ſo that the apoſtle's reaſon for then allowing ſociety with heathens is now applicable to us; we muſt needs go out of the world, if we will have no correſpondence with any one called a brother that is a fornicator, or railer, or drunkard, or covetous; and therefore, notwithſtanding this apoſtolical injunction, we may eat or drink, converſe and traffick with the wicked chriſtians among whom we dwell. But

2. It is evident from theſe words of the apoſtle, and that particular caſe to which they refer, that notorious offenders ought to be ſeparated from church-communion, till they have repented of their ſins, and given plain and ſatisfactory proofs of their amendment. The power of inflicting this ſpiritual puniſhment is, and muſt for the higheſt reaſons always be committed to ſpiritual governors, whoſe ſin no doubt is great and inexcuſable if they bear this ſword in vain, and wilfully ſuffer thoſe corrupt members which they might cut off to defile Chriſt's myſtical body, by him deſigned to be holy and with-

out blemiſh. Great likewiſe is the ſin, however frequent and cuſtomary in our pariſhes, of thoſe perſons who are obliged by their office and by their oaths to preſent offenders, if through favour, or fear, or negligence, they connive at any, and do not endeavour to bring all ſuch delinquents to the cenſure and ſhame which they deſerve. Very wonderful it is that ſo horrid a profanation of God's ſacred name, not only in this, but in numerous inſtances which might be mentioned, ſhould ſo ſlightly be regarded by the perſons who could prevent it, in a nation excelled by none which the world can ſhew, in real virtue and piety! May the correction of theſe enormities, to our great reproach neglected ſo long, be numbered amongſt the glories of the preſent reign, whoſe auſpicious dawn preſages every thing that is lovely and deſirable! But whatever the ſucceſs of our prayers may be, till the ſentence of exciſion is actually denounced, it is not to be deemed unlawful to join with wicked people in the publick offices of religion, there being no reaſon in the world why good chriſtians ſhould excommunicate themſelves becauſe bad ones are not excommunicated. Private perſons have no concern in this matter; At their peril it muſt be, who having it in their power to remove this ſcandal, yet ſuffer it to remain to give occaſion to the adverſaries of chriſtianity to ſpeak reproachfully, and to its friends to lament the downfal of that diſcipline which once was ſo beneficial to the church of God.

SPIRITUAL governors are not however raſhly to be cenſured for departing from that ſeverity which was practiſed in the primitive times. Poſſibly it is not in their power; perhaps prudence will not allow it. For the world is greatly changed from

from what it was formerly; and in our preſent corrupt ſtate when men are grown ſo impatient of reſtraint, and unreaſonably jealous of all church-power, a ſevere diſcipline might do more harm than what it once prevented. In the firſt ages of chriſtianity eccleſiaſtical authority was ſo highly reverenced, and ſo few were guilty of ſcandalous crimes, that it was eaſy to bring offenders to puniſhment; and on ſuch as were refractory and ſtubborn the apoſtles at leaſt had the power of inflicting corporal pains, ſufficient to make the moſt obſtinate ſubmit, as we ſee by the example of the inceſtuous *Corinthian* ſpoken of by St. *Paul*. But now ſince the number of ſinners is ſo great, the ſhame and fear of ſpiritual cenſures ſo much abated, and ſeverities of this kind more likely to exaſperate than reclaim many perſons whoſe countenance and protection is neceſſary to religion, though their lives are its reproach; under theſe circumſtances it may be proper to conſider what the times will bear; the rulers of the church may have good reaſon to relax the ſtrictneſs of its diſcipline, and like ſkilful pilots patiently to lie by when the torrent runs too ſtrong to be reſiſted. The end of all diſcipline is the advancement of true religion and virtue, and therefore muſt be more moderate or more ſevere, as may prove moſt ſubſervient to this end. If that power which once conduced to the edification, ſhould in our days unfortunately tend to the deſtruction of the church, there can no invariable rule be preſcribed for the exerciſe of it, but prudence and piety muſt direct the meaſures to be taken. Yet after all, we may be allowed with modeſty to wiſh, that thoſe great and godly perſons, by whoſe joint endeavours every religious reformation muſt be effected, would ſeriouſly think of ſome means likely to reſtore the diſcipline of

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the church to its antient dignity, or at leaſt to alleviate that contempt in which it is now held, not only by its enemies, but by its beſt friends,—by its moſt dutiful ſons, who are aſhamed to ſee, and if they had it in their power, would cover its nakedneſs. †

We may now proceed to conſider the nature of that duty implied in the Apoſtle's injunction, which I ſaid was obligatory at all times, being the moral part of the commandment, or canon; and that is, that we ſhould avoid, as much as we can with decency and convenience, the company of wicked perſons; that we ſhould take no delight in the converſation of ſuch, nor contract familiarities and friendſhips with them; A kind of private penance, or excommunication rather, which every chriſtian has the authority to denounce, and which wants not an eccleſiaſtical ſentence to enforce it.

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† As for the Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction, it has has been the burden of my life to ſee how it was adminiſtred. Our Courts are managed under the rules of the Canon Law, dilatory and expenſive: And as their conſtitution is bad, ſo the buſineſs in them is ſmall; and therefore all poſſible contrivances are uſed to make the moſt of thoſe Cauſes that come before them; ſo that they are univerſally dreaded and hated. God grant that a time may come, in which that noble deſign, ſo near being perfected in King *Edward* the ſixth's days, of the *Reformatio Legum Eccleſiaſticarum*, may be reviewed and eſtabliſhed: That ſo Matrimonial and Teſtamentary Cauſes, which are of a mixed nature, may be left, a little better regulated, to the Lay-hands of Chancellors and other Officers; but that the whole correction of the manners of the Laity, and the inſpection into the lives and labours of the Clergy, may be brought again into the hands of ſpiritual men, and be put into a better method.

This would bring our Church indeed into a primitive form, in which at preſent the Clergy have leſs authority, and are under more contempt, than in any Church that I have yet ſeen. Biſhop *Burnett*'s Hiſtory of his own Times. Vol. 2. P. 634-5.

The excellent Author of L' Eſprit des Loix, pointing at the *Engliſh* Clergy, hath the following remarkable Words, tending to our excuſe in this particular. " Il pourroit arriver qu'on eluderoit " ſes Aſſemblées, et qu'on ne voudroit pas lui permettre de corriger ſes abus mêmes, et que par " un delire de la liberté on aimeroit mieux laiſſer ſa reforme imparfaite, que de ſouffrir qu'il fût " reformateur." Liv. 19. Chap. 27. This candid Writer very truly ſuppoſes, that it is not the fault of the Clergy, that the grievances complained of are not corrected. In their preſent happy temper, very different from that which prevailed formerly, were they permitted to act in Convocation, it is to be hoped that much good would be the conſequence.

THE reaſonableneſs of which conduct there is no need to expatiate upon before my preſent audience. I doubt not but that themſelves are often inculcating the ſame truth, both in their publick exhortations and private diſcourſe; and therefore I ſhall reduce what might be offered upon this ſubject to the following obſervations,

1. To preſerve an intimacy with wicked perſons is inconſiſtent with that regard for God, and zeal for his honour, which is the diſtinguiſhing and characteriſtick principle of a ſincere chriſtian, and a religious man. To be fond of the company of thoſe whom we do not love is quite unnatural. But can we really love thoſe perſons, whoſe temper of mind, and whoſe whole behaviour are ſo contrary to our own, who are perverſely oppoſing that good deſign which we ſtudy to promote above all things in the world, whoſe whole life is a ſeries of indignities and affronts to Him whom we delight to honour? It is ſcarce poſſible, in mere human ſociety, to maintain a friendſhip with two perſons who are at open variance with each other, eſpecially when we are obliged by all the ties of honour and gratitude to prefer the intereſt of one. Should a great patron and benefactor of ours have a declared enemy that injures and affronts him, how could we with conſcience or decorum pitch upon that perſon for our companion and friend? ſome degree of reſentment might be expected from us who have ſuch high obligations; and what leſs could we ſhew than diſtance and reſerve?

HENCE we ſee the reaſonableneſs of the duty we are now conſidering. God who made us, and is daily pouring his benefits upon us, is that great friend to whom we muſt adhere; whoſe intereſts we muſt prefer to all worldly engagements, and whoſe friends we cannot be indeed, unleſs we have the ſame common friends and enemies with him. Lukewarm chriſtians may think this ſtrange, and reply to it, as to other parts of religious duty, This is a hard ſaying; who can bear it? But really it is no more than what men of true piety in all ages have obſerved. Hear the holy Pſalmiſt appealing to God, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee; "and am not I grieved with thoſe that riſe up againſt thee? "Yea I hate them right ſore, even as though they were mine "enemies." The behaviour of St. *John* to *Cerinthus* the heretick, though a late ſplenetick divine has with his uſual ſuperciliouſneſs thought fit to deride it, ſtands upon record unqueſtionable; and though not ſtrictly imitable by us in every time and circumſtance; yet ſhews in general what ſort of conduct ſincere piety will preſcribe, whenever we aſk counſel of it. To make much of them that fear the Lord, is part of the character of a righteous man—Conſider then what manner of perſon he muſt be who is a companion of all thoſe who neither fear him, nor keep his commandments.

ADD to this the great encouragement it muſt give to ungodly people to perſiſt in ſin, when they perceive that after all the elaborate declamations againſt vice, they are ſtill followed and careſſed by thoſe grave perſons who make them, and that in this particular they are upon the ſame footing with the

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good and virtuous. Of all worldly conſiderations, the moſt powerful reſtraint from diſhoneſt actions, is ſhame; and the dread of infamy would keep thouſands from being bad who can reſiſt the fear of all other penalties. "If any man, ſaith "the Apoſtle, obey not our word by this epiſtle, note that "man, and have no company with him, that he may be "aſhamed." The moſt profligate of men, whatever they may pretend, have a ſecret awe and reverence for the virtuous; and would all theſe combine to expreſs towards the other only that degree of averſion or reſerve which is conſiſtent with every form of civility in faſhion; this ſtriking reproof, whoſe voice without ſpeech or language would be heard among them, would be greater than they could bear, nor could they long hold out under the ignominy of ſuch treatment. This then is a diſcipline auxiliar to virtue, which is in the power of religious men, and I hope that there are many of them who employ it to this purpoſe. Pity it is that they will not unite, and with one conſent exert their endeavours! For it is the want of unanimity that ſpoils all; and wicked men, when they have gained a party among the good that will adhere to them, and ſeek their friendſhip, have gained the utmoſt that they wiſh, and will laugh at the preciſeneſs of thoſe Few, who are more ſtrict and ſcrupulous than their brethren.

VIRTUOUS perſons ſhould likewiſe conſider, to what ſcorn and reproach they expoſe religion, what occaſion they give to the adverſary to blaſpheme, by thoſe diſgraceful applications and attachments, which few of them, I fear, are ſo careful to avoid as might be expected from their piety. When men of the moſt grave, nay ſacred characters are ſeen ſo aſſiduous

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and ſo cringing in their attendance upon power and grandeur, ſo eager and preſſing to pay their court to Thoſe whom the fathers of the antient church, ſtrangers to our ambition, and unſkilled in its arts, would inſtantly have excluded from chriſtian communion; what a handle muſt they give to theſe ſcoffers to inſult, and to ſuſpect the reality of that virtue, which can ſtoop ſo low, and proſtitute itſelf, having mens perſons, the perſons of the vileſt among the ſons of men, in admiration becauſe of advantage? And how can theſe workers of wickedneſs be more effectually encouraged to perſiſt in their vile courſes without remorſe or ſhame, than by giving them ſuch cauſe to think, that religion is but a cloke, and that all men's hearts are ſet upon this world, though they ſometimes pretend, but with too diſcoverable a grimace, to look towards another?

3. How vaſtly muſt it diſhearten all who are ſincerely good, to ſee that what is their property, and by divine appointment part of their reward, the reſpect and reverence of the wiſe and virtuous, is beſtowed promiſcuouſly. Honours are only valuable as they are teſtimonies of men's worth; the judicious will deſpiſe them when they are made common and unclean by being ſcattered among the multitude. True piety is indeed built upon a firmer foundation, and looks for a more noble recompence than any which this world can give; yet in its preſent imperfect ſtate, and conflict with temptation, it may be dangerous to deprive it of any kind of ſupport with which God has thought fit to ſtrengthen it. A reſolution amongſt good men to treat one another with a diſtinguiſhing regard would give courage and ſpirit to each of them, and enable

enable them with eaſe to go through ſome trials which are now difficult enough; they would deſpiſe the inſults which they often meet with from the vicious and profane; the ſcornful reproof of the wealthy, and the deſpitefulneſs of the proud would give them no diſquiet; or rather, the proud themſelves would be too much humbled to have any thoughts of inſulting over others. But when virtuous perſons ſee themſelves betrayed by the party that ſhould ſtick to them; and the honour which is their due, and their only preſent recompence for many temporal diſadvantages, ſo baſely proſtituted upon infamous characters; it is no wonder if they are diſcouraged and mortified by ſuch treachery as this, and join with the Pſalmiſt in his paſſionate complaint, "It was not "an open enemy that did me this diſhonour, for then I could "have born it; neither was it mine adverſary that did mag-"nify himſelf againſt me, for then peradventure I would "have hid myſelf from him; But it was even thou, my com-"panion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend. We took "ſweet counſel together, and walked in the houſe of God as "friends." They who are moſt firmly fixed in virtue and piety, will think and ſpeak thus in this trying circumſtance; but the weak and unſtable may be tempted to fall away, when they ſee this remarkable diſtinction between good and bad men ſo totally confounded even by thoſe whoſe common intereſt requires them to preſerve it.

LASTLY, it behoves virtuous perſons ſeriouſly to reflect on the great hazard they themſelves run by unneceſſary familiarities with wicked people. "He that toucheth pitch, ſaith "the wiſe man, ſhall be defiled therewith;" And he that is a

companion of ſinners muſt be very careful, or very fortunate if no ſpeck of their uncleanneſs ſticks to him. Reaſonable creatures have a natural abhorrence of vice as of a thing monſtrous and deformed; but when they ſee it every day, and keep cloſe to it, it will grow leſs ſhocking by degrees; their firſt averſion will wear off in time, and perhaps may change into a liking. Moſt men alſo are diſpoſed to imitate what they often ſee, and ſlide inſenſibly into the ways and manners of their aſſociates. Ungodly perſons delight in making others as bad as themſelves, and to be ſharers in their puniſhment. The great enemy of mankind is ever watchful to ſeduce the virtuous, and can more eaſily draw them into his ſnare, when he finds them ſtraggling into his territories. From theſe reflections we may ſee the reaſonableneſs of the duty we are recommending. The primitive church had the ſame ſenſe of it; notorious ſinners were ſeparated from chriſtian communion and ſociety; not ſo much for their own recovery, as for the ſafety of the innocent; and corrupt members were cut off from the body of Chriſt, that the ſound parts might be preſerved from the infection.

THE reaſonableneſs therefore of this general rule is unqueſtionable. But great difficulties may ariſe in the application of it to particular caſes, in which the diverſity of circumſtances, perſons and times will require alſo a diverſity of conduct; And in none ſo remarkably as in us the miniſters of the goſpel, in whom wide deviations from the letter of this precept are not only allowed, but in ſome inſtances are matter of ſtrict duty. For they that are whole need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick; We come not to call the righteous, but

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ſinners to repentance, with whom therefore, imitating the divine author of our miſſion, we muſt converſe familiarly, ſometimes muſt eat and drink, if we hope to reform them effectually.

But how ſhall we do this without ſcandal and reproach? Will not the phariſees of this age ſay to our people, Why eateth your miniſter with publicans and ſinners? This was objected to him whoſe diſciples and ſervants we are, and unleſs the ſervant be above his lord, we alſo muſt expect the like injurious treatment. Nay whatſoever our conduct may be, cenſure will attend us from one ſect or other. For *John* came neither eating nor drinking, and they ſaid, he hath a devil, juſt as they ſaid of the Son of man whoſe behaviour was the reverſe, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and ſinners. But wiſdom, ſays our Saviour, is juſtified of her children.—Let our conduct be what wiſe people and our own conſcience ſhall approve, and then we need not fear the malicious or raſh cenſures of either the puritan, or the profligate. This doubtleſs is the beſt general rule. But, as I ſaid, great difficulties will frequently ſtart up to perplex the moſt intelligent and well-meaning man, when he proceeds to act accordingly in particular caſes. It may be of ſervice to conſider a few of them, and what ſort of behaviour prudence and duty will preſcribe in thoſe caſes.

Should it be our misfortune to be placed in the neighbourhood of ſome wicked man of great wealth and quality, with whom all intercourſe cannot decently be avoided, we muſt certainly pay him that reſpect and outward ceremony which

which cuſtom exacts from inferiors towards people of his rank; for this is paid to the worldly ſtation, which has its rights and privileges diſtinct, and does not interfere with that reverence of the heart, which is only due to intellectual and moral excellence. But having properly performed theſe faſhionable devoirs, I queſtion whether we can with any propriety proceed much farther. All anxious ſolicitude to pay unuſual court, to ſwell the liſt of his clients, to aſſiſt at his rural diverſions, to give that paraſitical attendance which frequently incumbers the tables of the great, are quite irreconcileable with all clerical decorum. This laſt eſpecially, inſtead of doing us that honour which we vainly expect from it, will ſink our character to a low degree; it will give occaſion to the vileſt inſinuations, and expoſe us not unjuſtly to the contempt and ſcorn even of the meaneſt perſons, whoſe forced ſervice will too often be accompanied with the countenance and attitude of thoſe very abjects whom the Pſalmiſt deſcribes, and produces as evidence of his then low and diſtreſsful ſituation. Well did the wiſe Apoſtle admoniſh his pupil-miniſter, "Let no man deſpiſe thee." For if we do, our authority is gone; we loſe all our influence, all our ability to do good in our vocation, which is frequently founded, though not rightly ſo, more in the perſonal than ſacerdotal character.

SHOULD it be our lot to have ſome particular connexion with a great man of bad morals; if much harm to ourſelves and families might be the conſequence of his diſpleaſure, much benefit the reſult of his countenance and favour; if he be the patron of, and preſented us to our benefice; or if he reſides in our pariſh, and has great influence there, will not

not this make ſome difference in the caſe? I muſt confeſs that I think it will, and that theſe conſiderations will enlarge our ſcope, and relax a little the ſtrictneſs of that reſerve which otherwiſe would become a clergyman.

In eſſential articles no motives of this kind, no fears, proſpects, or retroſpects ſhould have any weight; But to ſacrifice whatever is moſt valuable in this world to a little ceremony and form of behaviour is a hard ſaying which few can bear; and perhaps they who can, and who chuſe to practiſe it, would diſcover more of cynical pride than of the true chriſtian philoſophy.

In the laſt caſe, where the noble perſon is our own pariſhioner, it is our duty to ſhew him a more particular reſpect; to be more frequent at his table, converſant in his family, cheerful and familiar with his chief, affable and courteous to his inferior, domeſticks; for by this means we ſhall be able to do much good among them; at leaſt, to reſtrain many of thoſe exceſſes ſo common in great houſes, and from thence propagated, in ſpite of the good miniſter's example and reproof, through his whole pariſh.

But here likewiſe are certain rules from which no man's high rank, nor our caſual attachments to him, can at any time ſet us free. If we chance to be a gueſt at the greateſt table, we muſt not omit the pious invocation ſo decent at that place; a devotion, not introduced by any chriſtian ſuperſtition, but derived from the remoteſt antiquity even of the gentile world.

* If we are not called upon to perform the office, we muſt not heſitate to do it ſpontaneouſly, and that, with a formality of geſture and countenance, which may excite attention and reverence in thoſe who are leaſt uſed to it on the moſt ſolemn occaſions. If in theſe gay companies things too light and ludicrous ſhould be ſpoken, it may ſuffice generally to expreſs our diſlike by an unuſual gravity of aſpect and deportment. But if the converſation ſhould run into profaneneſs or obſcenity among perſons too high for verbal reproof, this we muſt look upon as a ſignal to withdraw; the doing of which the greateſt maſters of rhetorick have employed as a more ſevere and affecting rebuke than the moſt powerful language. † Certain it is, that to do otherwiſe would ſeem vaſtly ſtrange in a chriſtian miniſter, and juſtly expoſe him to the ſcoffs of thoſe libertines, whoſe malice, when weightier faults cannot be found, will eagerly catch at every light ſtraw floating on the ſurface of a fair character.

THERE are certain cuſtoms falſely boaſting their antient deſcent,

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* Ουδε τις ετλη
Πριν πιεειν, πριν λειψαι υπερμενει Κρονιωνι. Il. H. 481.
This was ſpoken of military men. The ſame occurs in numberleſs other places.
N. B. The Heathen Libations were equivalent to our ſaying grace.

† Οιη δ' Αιακος Ψυχη Τελαμωνιαδαο Νοσφιν αφεστηκει
Ως εφαμην ὅ δε μ' ουδεν αμειβετο βη δε μετ' αλλας
Ψυχας Οδυσσ Λ Τ Αιακος εν νεκυια σιωπη, μεγα και παντος υψηλοτερον λογε. Longin. περι υψους Sect. 9.
Illa ſolo fixos oculos averſa tenebat——
Tandem proripuit ſeſe, atque inimica refugit
In nemus umbriferum. Æneid VI.
To theſe celebrated Names I ſcruple not to add the no leſs reſpectable authority of One who does honour to the *Britiſh* Coronet. — "Oh! that I were alive again, and reſtored to my throne "that I might puniſh the audaciouſneſs of this hoary traitor! — But ſee! he leaves me, he turns "his back on me with cool contempt! — Alas! do I not deſerve that contempt? In ſpite of my-"ſelf I muſt own that I do." Dialogues of the Dead. Chriſtina and Oxenſtiern.

ſcent, and uſurping the legitimate name which no eccleſiaſtical heraldry will allow them, whereof it may be thought affectedly ſingular to queſtion the propriety at this day. I will rely on the candour of you, my Brethren, whilſt I take the freedom to mention one of them, which, however blameleſs in itſelf, is often made the object of ridicule; And you will ſoon perceive that it is not an obſervation forced in, but perfectly coincident with my preſent argument.

It was part of the ſtate, and I hope likewiſe of the piety of the former age, to procure a clergyman to reſide within the walls of each noble houſe, and to miniſter to the family in things ſacred; An office which when duly diſcharged was of excellent uſe, and for that reaſon alone, as we may ſuppoſe, eſteemed of ſome dignity. But now when this reputable form of godlineſs hath ſuffered the ſame fate with many others of the externals of religion, it is hard to ſay what ſhould be the inducement to any one, who as an ambaſſador of Chriſt Jeſus, ſhould magnify his office, to condeſcend to the acceptance of this empty title, catching at the ſhadow when the ſubſtance is gone. Even whilſt it had a real exiſtence, and was an important truſt, it was debated warmly, and on both ſides ridiculouſly enough, † whether it ſhould be deemed an employment of ſervitude, or of authority. Concerning the latter there can at preſent be no diſpute; but as to the former, the conſequence of this fantaſtick title is not quite clear. Let it ſuffice that it will frequently create a dependence or connexion, embarraſſing to worthy men, deſirous to

† See *Collier*'s Eſſays.—Office of a Chaplain.

to obey that apoſtolical injunction, for the ſake of which I have here entered into this argument, ſincerely wiſhing, that in the various revolutions of fancy and caprice, this one good faſhion may be revived in its priſtine ſtate, with that uſefulneſs and undiſputed dignity which it ſtill preſerves in our epiſcopal families.

THESE intereſting points being now ſettled, there will be no need to ſay much of the propriety of our common behaviour to the next claſs of men,—thoſe who are uſually eſteemed to be of the ſame rank and ſtation with a clergyman. In this caſe there is leſs occaſion for punctilio; we may keep without indecency a greater diſtance and reſerve; or we may rebuke with much plainneſs, and ſome ſeverity, if need ſhall be. Our end is reformation; diſcretion muſt direct the means, whether it ſhall be the ſolemn and auſtere, or the familiar and the affable. Prudence, I ſay, muſt preſcribe in this caſe; for otherwiſe a miniſter with the beſt intentions unwarily may follow the bent and turn of his own mind, when he ought chiefly to regard the temper of thoſe whoſe amendment he aims at; Or it is poſſible that in ſome, this amendment may be made a cloke for the gratification of their own humour and inclination. A moroſe or fretful man may pretend the correction of vice, when he only ſeeks to indulge his own ſpleen by harſh and unſeaſonable expoſtulation, or ſupercilious ſtiffneſs. The lover of pleaſure may allege the ſame when he waſtes his time in jovial company, or the ſlothful when he ſaunters it away in trifling viſits. Impartially we muſt ſearch our own hearts leſt we deceive ourſelves in theſe inſtances; conſidering alſo that we act in

the

the preſence of a cenſorious world, ready to put the worſt conſtruction on every particularity of behaviour in us, to which ſide ſoever it may incline.

With regard to perſons of the loweſt claſs there is leſs difficulty. Civility is due to all who have not forfeited their right to it, and condeſcenſion to men of low eſtate is a goſpel duty. Yet a ſenſe of decency, and reverence of character will always reſtrain a miniſter of Chriſt from vulgar familiarities. But to wicked people of the inferior rank, to the profligately wicked as they are wont to be, ſurely no ceremony need be uſed, no rebuke can be too ſevere, or out of ſeaſon; and when that is ineffectual, the aid of the ſecular arm, a fatal weapon in the hands of bigots, may here with great propriety be called in to puniſh this flagrant and undiſputed hereſy.

May I preſume to recommend it to you, my Brethren, you eſpecially who exerciſe your function in populous towns, never to forbear this method of correction ſo ready at hand, and to the lower people the moſt ſenſible and affecting; for thus you will in time reſtrain, at leaſt, all publick enormities, which are now ſo ſhocking, and the cauſe of ſuch complaining to every ſober and pious chriſtian who walks your ſtreets.

One word more concerning our private and domeſtick behaviour with reſpect to the apoſtolical injunction which we are now conſidering. Doubtleſs, whatever diſcipline we are commanded to apply to the correction of vice in the world around us, we ought to exerciſe for the ſame end, moſt

ſtrictly and rigorouſly in our own families, which are ſet up to be a light to the whole neighbourhood where we dwell, and a very fatal one it will be, if through our neglect it ſhould prove a falſe one. It is becoming the wives, the children, the ſervants of clergymen to be ſomewhat more orderly and grave than thoſe of other houſes; and the two firſt-mentioned I believe are commonly ſo. If the morals of inferior domeſticks, more abſolutely in our power, and with whom no ceremony is needful, are not inſiſted on with proper ſtrictneſs, this our neglect will be highly blameable, and argue our incapacity for a more important truſt. Ruling their children and their own houſes well, ſaith the Apoſtle, for if a man know not how to rule his own houſe, how ſhall he take care of the church of God? We find St. *Paul* ſending his reſpects to the churches in the houſes of ſome devout chriſtians. It would be well if there was a private church in the houſe of every miniſter, in whoſe pariſh the publick worſhip, for defect of a ſuitable congregation to attend it, is leſs frequently performed; or at leaſt, that the gravity and regularity of his houſe confeſs'd its alliance with that religious aſſembly which ſupports it. But let every wicked perſon, as he well deſerves, be excluded from the pale of this church, and ſtand excommunicate by that irreverſible ſentence, which every parent and maſter has an indiſputed right to pronounce in his own family. *David* in his domeſtick capacity exerciſed this juriſdiction. "A froward heart, ſays he, ſhall depart from me, I "will not know a wicked perſon. Mine eyes look upon ſuch "as are faithful in the land that they may dwell with me. "Whoſo leadeth a godly life he ſhall be my ſervant. There "ſhall no deceitful perſon dwell in my houſe, he that telleth "lies

" lies ſhall not tarry in my ſight." In his regal capacity he went much farther. " I ſhall ſoon deſtroy all the un-
" godly that are in the land, that I may root out all wicked
" doers from the city of the Lord."

EVERY one of us has it in his power to imitate this religious perſon in his private character; And it is to be hoped that worthy magiſtrates are not wanting, zealous to emulate his publick one, by truly and indifferently miniſtring juſtice, to the puniſhment of wickedneſs and vice, and to the maintenance of God's true religion and virtue.

LET me conclude by obſerving, that theſe maladies of the ſoul, whoſe extirpation has been recommended, are by far the worſt to which the wretchedneſs of human nature is liable. The charity therefore, which either by rough or lenient methods aims at the cure of them, is the moſt excellent of all; and no bounties, which terminate in the relief of a periſhable body, will compenſate the defect of it, however faſhionable they may ſometimes be. For this is the real charity, of which the goſpel of Chriſt exhibits ſo illuſtrious an example; that charity which never faileth, whoſe benefits will extend to everlaſting ages, when this world, and the vile bodies by which it is inhabited, ſhall no more be ſeen.

FINIS.

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